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**BLUNT URGES PENALTIES IN ALLEGEDLY ILLEGAL VOTING ; REPORT TARGETS NOV. 7 ELECTION IN CITY, COUNTY**  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri) July 26, 2001 Thursday Five Star Lift Edition

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St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

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**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. A1**LENGTH:** 715 words

**HEADLINE: BLUNT URGES PENALTIES IN ALLEGEDLY ILLEGAL VOTING ;**  
**REPORT TARGETS NOV. 7 ELECTION IN CITY, COUNTY**

**BYLINE:** Jo Mannies Post-Dispatch Political Correspondent Tim Bryant Of The Post-Dispatch Contributed To This Report.

**BODY:**

Secretary of State Matt Blunt is calling on authorities to punish those responsible for at least 1,384 ballots that he says were cast illegally on Nov. 7 in St. Louis and St. Louis County.

"It's my hope that all intentional violators will be punished," Blunt said at a news conference Wednesday at his St. Louis office. He released copies of his 47-page report detailing the alleged illegal votes that he said "cast a real shadow over the elections process."

The key culprits, he added, are the voters who cast those suspect ballots. "It is absolutely necessary that we punish some people," he said.

But state Senate President Pro Tem Peter Kinder, R-Cape Girardeau, said he planned to initiate actions against judges in St. Louis and St. Louis County who issued court orders allowing 1,233 of those alleged illegal votes.

The judges are accused of granting the orders to people who didn't meet the requirements set under state law. The judges say they complied with state law.

Blunt declared that the additional illegal votes came from:

- \* 114 felons who were improperly allowed to vote.
- \* At least 23 people who appeared to have voted twice.
- \* 14 illegal ballots apparently cast in the name of dead voters.

He raised questions about 138 other votes, because of suspicions that additional people voted twice or used fraudulent addresses.

The number of alleged illegal votes wouldn't have altered the results in several close Missouri contests Nov. 7. Blunt said his aim was to protect the sanctity of future elections.

U.S. Attorney Ray Gruender said his office will review Blunt's allegations and is sending a copy of Blunt's report to the U.S. Justice Department. Gruender's office is in the middle of a grand jury investigation into other, unrelated allegations of attempts to illegally register city voters.

Blunt also plans to renew a push for legislative changes that failed last session, such as a uniform statewide voting system for casting and counting ballots.

Kinder said election reform will be "at the top of our priority list" in the GOP-controlled state Senate next year.

In the Democratic-controlled House, where Blunt's bill died last session, Speaker Jim Kreider said he's forming a special elections committee to begin discussions this fall on cost-effective ways to improve elections.

The issue last year was largely the \$50 million price tag, said Kreider, D-Nixa. "We just don't have the money."

Most of Blunt's accusations of wrongdoing center on existing laws that he says need to be properly enforced.

For example, 45 election judges staffing the city's polls on Nov. 7 weren't registered voters as required by law, he said. And 79 city voters cast ballots even though they were registered from addresses that the city Election Board had "verified to be vacant lots," Blunt's report said.

As for the disputed court orders, Blunt alleged that there was "a coordinated effort" to grant the orders to people who didn't qualify.

While Blunt declined to identify who did the coordinating, the report's implied targets were Democrats.

The report attacks the Democrats' effort on Nov. 7 to keep area polls open an extra three hours. Blunt said Wednesday that their suit wasn't illegal, but that Judge Evelyn Baker acted improperly in granting the request. A state appeals court shut down the polls 45 minutes later.

U.S. Rep. William Lacy Clay Jr., among those who filed the suit, said Wednesday that Blunt's report "smacked of politics." Clay said he also opposed vote fraud but was disturbed that Blunt's report failed to address allegations that thousands of legitimately registered city voters were denied ballots because of the city's "inactive voter list." Those voters had to get approval from Election Board officials before they could vote and jammed the headquarters that election night.

"That's why I went to court that day to keep the polls open, and I'd do it again," Clay said.

Meanwhile, Blunt won strong praise from Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo.

"This report confirms the sad history of tolerance for vote fraud in St. Louis city and county," Bond said. "I have introduced legislation at the federal level and urge Missouri lawmakers to use this report to draft appropriate safeguards into Missouri state law."

**NOTES:**

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